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FADRC

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY _____ DATE _____

RDS or XDS EXT. DATE _____

TS AUTH. _____ REASON(S) _____

DECLASSIFY EXCEPT _____

DECLASSIFY _____

RELEASE IN _____

P/C or FOI EXEMPTIONS _____

1868

December 15, 1978

Dear Mr. Montgomery:

Thank you for writing to the President concerning information about the U.S. response to the Guyana tragedy.

On Sunday, November 19, it had become clear that the United States Government was facing a major crisis in Guyana. An American Congressman and other Americans in his party had been killed. A settlement believed to include over 1,000 Americans was involved, and its situation was uncertain. It was apparent that the Government of Guyana required assistance in handling a major emergency created by the presence of Americans within its borders.

The President, acting under his constitutional authority as Chief Executive and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, ordered the departments of our government to take action to deal with this emergency. The operational decisions within the U.S. Government in this unique situation were made by the Secretary of State in conjunction with some of his Cabinet colleagues.

Under the President's Executive authorities, medical evacuation for injured Americans was immediately ordered, and the United States Government offered assistance to the Government of Guyana to prevent further loss of life.

The Honorable
Gillespie V. Montgomery,
House of Representatives.

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As events progressed, it became clear that there were large numbers of Americans dead. For a time, it was believed that there were survivors in the jungle; and the United States adjusted and increased its assistance to help the search by Guyana police and military. Finally, when the full scope of the tragedy of Jonestown was clear, our Government was requested by the Government of Guyana to remove the bodies. This operation was considered essential in handling the emergency situation which existed in Guyana at the time.

The Justice Department is fully exploring possible legal remedies which can be used to recover the cost the U.S. Government has incurred in removing and processing the bodies of Americans from Guyana. Now that the emergency is substantially over, the Office of Management and Budget and other agencies are reviewing the various operations to determine the exact cost to the United States Government. Although the costs to the United States Government of an effort of this magnitude obviously are considerable, they are substantially lower than the $8 million figure used in some press reports. Please be assured that we will report fully to appropriate congressional committees on these aspects of the operation upon completion of our review. Meanwhile, the Justice Department will make all efforts to recover the costs to the U. S. Government.

If you have any further questions, you may wish to contact Deputy Assistant Secretary John Bushnell in our Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, whose telephone number is 632-8562.

Sincerely,

DB/GJ

Douglas J. Bennet, Jr.
Assistant Secretary for
Congressional Relations

Drafted: ARA/CAR:RZImmermann:lm
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ARA:GLister
ARA:JABushnell
H:ENef
EN/GW

1541C

G.V. "SONNY" MONTGOMERY
3RD DISTRICT, MISSISSIPPI

2367 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
AREA CODE (202) 225-5031

DISTRICT OFFICE:
MERIDIAN, MISSISSIPPI 39301
AREA CODE (601) 693-6681

P780187-0029

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

COMMITTEES:
ARMED SERVICES
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTAN
JACK VANCE

November 27, 1978

Ack. FM/State
CONGRESSIONAL
LIAISON
NOV 29 1978
cc: Lipshutz, Justice

The President
The White House
Washington, D. C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

In the last few days numerous constituents of mine have contacted me to express deep concern over the tremendous government expense to return the bodies of the suicide victims from Guyana. They question whether this is a legitimate expense to be borne by the American taxpayers.

I must admit that questions have arisen in my own mind since in the past I have contacted the Department of State concerning financial assistance in the return of a deceased constituent from a foreign country and was denied any assistance other than advisory.

In view of the above I respectfully request that you direct the appropriate agencies of the Executive Branch to make a legal determination if the recent actions taken in respect to the suicide victims goes beyond legal authority as outlined in 22 United States Code 1175-1179. I also request that the appropriate agencies of government determine if it is legally possible to attach the tangible property and assets of the Peoples Temple and, if so, to file suit for attachment in order that these assets may be used to help defray the cost of returning the bodies.

I believe my constituents have raised very legitimate concerns which deserve a full and complete explanation from our government.

Sincerely,

G. V. Montgomery

Gillespie V. Montgomery
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

GVM:ac

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ID DOS 781207028 THE WHITE HOUSE OFFICE

REFERRAL

ACTION is assigned ARA

TO: DOS DATE: DEC 07 78

REPLY: DIRECT REPLY. FURNISH INFORMATION COPY

IF MORE THAN 9 DAYS DELAY IS ENCOUNTERED PLEASE TELEPHONE MS. BYRNE 456-2113

BASIC CORRESPONDENCE AND CONTROL SHEET AND COPY OF RESPONSE (OR DRAFT) MUST BE RETURNED TO: AGENCY LIAISON (ROOM 94) WHITE HOUSE.

REMARKS: DIRECT REPLY TO CONGRESSMAN WITH INFO COPY TO W.H. CONGRESSIONAL LIAISON, 198 EOB

E. SMALL REFERRAL

X LETTER MAILGRAM TELEGRAM DATED: NOV 27 78

TO: PRESIDENT CARTER

FROM: THE HON. SONNY MONTGOMERY, U.S. HOUSE OF REP.

SUBJECT: EXPENSE OF RETURNING BODIES FROM GUYANA

RESPONSE:

CLOSED OUT:

BY DIRECTION OF THE PRESIDENT:

PAMELA ZINN

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF CORRESPONDENCE

FADRC
DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

1978 DEC 11 PM 3 10

RECEIVED
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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